The focus of the information or galdegaia in whole texts (and II)

Mitxel Kaltzakorta Mentxaka

Abstract

In this article the author studies the use of the focus in six full texts from the book Sugearen errautsa by Tartas. Altube’s rule of the galdegaia or focus, approved by Euskaltzaindia (Royal Academy of the Basque Language), states that the focus should be positioned just before the verb. The writer from Zuberoa (Soule) places the focus after the verb in most cases making his stories easier to read in that way.

Keywords: focus or galdegaia, position of the focus, nucleus of the information, information complement

0. Foreword

In the previous article, we looked at the focus in whole texts orally produced in the southern Basque Country; in the present, however, we shall analyse several texts from the book Sugearen errautsa written in Zuberoan by Tartas, transcribed by I. Mujika and published by Alberdania.

As we shall not limit ourselves to focus matters, let us pinpoint the objectives of this brief paper: first and foremost, we would like to show where Tartas, the writer from Zuberoa, places the focus in main clauses; second, we wish to examine the position of the focus in subordinate clauses; and third, we shall address other interesting issues too.

In order to achieve those objectives, we shall take two steps: to begin with the texts will be analysed one by one (6 narrative pieces); finally, we shall draw conclusions. These are the six texts under examination:

1. Herioa andere noblea da
2. Historia eder bat
3. Justoaren hiltzean ez da negarrik egin behar
4. Egun batez español bat
5. Ene lumaren herexa
6. Gizon bat egun batez

We shall only consider affirmative clauses, leaving aside negative and interrogative ones. Besides, we shall take the narrative pieces as they appear in the book, that is, written in understandable Zuberoan.

1. Text analysis

The book Sugearen errautsa comprises many short stories, and as mentioned above, we shall look at six, one piece at a time. First, the text is introduced (main verbs between square brackets and focused elements in bold), and second, each sentence is analysed. Here follows the first piece:

1.1. Herioa andere noblea da


In the first sentence, the focus comes after the verb. This is how it would be written nowadays:


In the second sentence, the focus follows the verb in all clauses (main and subordinate). This is how it would be used these days:

Gizonari eta emazteari bat edo biga edo hirur ‘one or two or three’ [edekitzen du] edo gehiago nahi bazara, baten ehun [emaiten du], biden mila, hiruren milioi bat, ez daki zenbat.

In that second sentence, the verb (emaiten du ‘it gives’) is omitted twice: before mila ‘a thousand’ and before milioi bat ‘a million’.

In the next sentence, a coordinate sentence, the focus of each coordinated sentence follows the verb. Let’s move the focused phrases before the verb the way writers do it nowadays:

Bizitza korporala eta denborala [edekitzen du] baina bizitza espirituala eta eternala berehala [emaiten].

The following sentence is again a coordinate sentence. We shall overlook the first coordinated sentence within it because it is in the negative form. In
the second coordinated sentence, the focus comes after the verb. This is what the sentence would look like moving the focus to its place according to the rules, i.e. before the verb:

• Korporalak ez du konparazionerik espiritualarekin, ez denboralak eternalarekin, alabaina espirituala korporalaren [emaiten du] eta eternala denboralaren.

In this first analysed text, the focus follows the verb in absolutely all main sentences.

1.2. Historia eder bat


First paragraph:

In the first sentence, there is a subordinate relative clause, and in it the focus (Damon et Pythias ‘Damon and Phythias’) comes after the verb. Placing the focus before the verb:

• zoinak Damon et Pythias deitatzaten baitziren, biak adiskide fidelak eta segurak.

Second paragraph:

• Historiak [dio ‘it says’] —eta ederra delakoz [nahi dut ‘I want’] ene liburutto honean iskiribuz ezarri ‘put down in writing’— Denis Sirakusako tiran handi hark bi adiskide brabe eta leial haietarik bat kondenatu zuela hiltzera ‘that he condemned one of those two brave and loyal friends to die’.

Leaving out the parenthetical element, the sentence structure is the following:

• Historiak Denis Sirakusako tiran handi hark bi adiskide brabe eta leial haietarik bat hiltzera kondenatu zuela [dio].

It is terribly hard to read it. Traditionally, the subject is often very rightly placed after the main verb (Dio historiak… ‘Say the story…’).

Let’s analyse the parenthetical element now. This is probably how it would be written nowadays:

• —eta ene liburutto honetan iskiribuz ezarri [nahi dut] ederra delakoz—

Do compare, you the reader, the original and the variant and choose. There is quite a difference. The choice is clear.

Let’s go on to the second sentence:

• Kriminalak [galde egin zuen ‘he asked for’] hamabost egun epe eta espazio ‘fifteen days time and space’, presondegitik jalgirik, bere adiskideen eta askazien ikustera joateko.

The rule of the focus is not followed in the main clause (the focus comes after the verb); the subordinate clauses, on the contrary, follow it.

This is the third and last sentence:

• Justiziak [refusatu zuen ‘it refused him’] kriminalari galdatu zuen epe eta espazioa ‘the time and space he had asked for’, beldurrez behin largantza balu presondegitik jalgitzeko, ez la din bihur kartzelara, ez lezan bere hitza eduki, eta justiziaz trufa la din, behin kanpoa eta libartea erdiets baleza.

If we look at the main sentence, the focus of it comes after the verb; in the subordinate clauses, though, the rule of the focus is followed.

There is something else worth attention, namely the adequacy of the use of the subjunctive (ez la din bihur...
The adverb and the clause introduced by it would nowadays be reorganised like this:

- kartzelara bihur ez ladin baldurrez

There is a difference between the two, but not too big. With long subjective clauses the difference can be quite considerable, though.

Third paragraph:

- Zer egin du bertze adiskideak? [Sartzen da ‘he gets in’] kartzelan ‘in prison’ adiskide kondenatuaren berme, paktu eta kondizio eginit, kondenatu ez balitzen hamabost egunen barnean, hark iragan behar zuen pena eta suplizia patituko zuela haren lekutan. Paktu horren azpian bata [jalgi da ‘he has come out’] kartzenlatik ‘of prison’ eta bertzea han ‘there’ [sartu ‘he has gone in’] haren plazan.

The first sentence is an interrogative sentence, thus we shall leave it and go on to the second one. Kartzelan ‘in jail’ is the focus of the main sentence, and it follows the verb. The same happens with haren lekutan ‘in his place’ in the last subordinate clause, a nominal clause. In the other subordinate clauses the focus is in its canonical position, i.e. before the verb.

The third and last sentence consists of two sentences: the focus comes after the verb in the first coordinated sentence and before the verb in the second one.

Last paragraph:

- Zer gertatu da? Hitza zen bezala, hamabost egunen barnean kriminala [itzuli zen ‘he returned’] presondegiala ‘to the prison house’, bere adiskidearen bere bermegoatik delibratzera. Denis tiranak, ikusirik bitarte adiskoeta eta bertzearen leialteta, eta admiraturik bi adiskide haien korajea, kriminalari eta kondenatuari [eman zuen ‘he gave’] bizia ‘life’, eta biak [otoi ‘he pleaded’] bera heren adiskide bere konpanian rezebi lezaten ‘that they receive him in their company’, haien adiskide nahi zela bizi eta hil.

The first sentence is a question, so we shall leave it. In the second position, the position of the focus of the main sentence differs from the position of the focus of the subordinate clause: presondegiala ‘to the prison house’ follows the verb, whereas bermegoatik ‘from his pledge’ precedes it.

The last sentence has two parts divided by the conjunction eta ‘and’. Let’s look at the position of the focus in the main sentence of the first part:

- Denis tiranak, (...) kriminalari eta kondenatuari [eman zuen] bizia

And in the subordinate clauses of this same section (the focused elements in italics follow the verb):

- ikusirik bataren amodioa eta bertzearen leialteta
- admiraturik bi adiskide haien korajea

Taking into account the rule of the galdegaia, this is how this section would be written nowadays:

- Denis tiranak, bataren amodioa eta bertzearen leialteta ikusirik, eta bi adiskide haien korajea admiraturik, kriminalari eta kondenatuari bizia [eman zuen]

Sequenced like that, the sentence is harder to read.

This is the second part that is left to analyse:

- eta biak [otoi] bera heren adiskide bere konpanian rezebi lezaten, haien adiskide nahi zela bizi eta hil.

The focus is the subjunctive clause itself, and it follows the verb. After it comes the nominal clause, and within it there is a different word order from that used in the southern Basque Country (bizia hil nahi zela ‘that he wanted to live and die’). The northern proposal is more appropriate, especially when the coordinated subordinate clauses are long.

1.3. Justoaren hiltzean ez da negarrik egin behar

The first sentence being a negative sentence, we shall go on to the second one. The focus of the main sentence follows the verb. The focus of the main sentence follows the verb. The focus of the main sentence follows the verb.

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In the first two subordinate clauses the rule is broken, and in the following two, it is respected. The writer, Tartas, never thought of writing anything like this:

The reading is harder, especially with the longer focus phrase before the verb.

There is another rather interesting matter. Tartas writes:

Only the first element of the enumeration is before the verb, and the rest are placed after it. Nowadays we would write:

There is quite a gap between one way of writing and the other, not to mention when the enumeration comprises several complex elements.

Let’s move on to the last sentence, indeed a long sentence:

In the first section, reading up to the first coordinator eta ‘and’, the rule is broken four times out of four. Besides, the subordinating prefixes are not at the end but at the beginning. Rewording the whole piece according to nowadays orthodox, the result would be this:

The first two sentences of the following section are negative sentences, and we shall not analyse them. The focus comes before the verb in the next sentence and after it in the last one.
1.4. Egun batez español bat


Arrazoi [zuuen] españolak hala erraitera horari, zeren etsaiak dituenak ez baitu behar lo egin, baina bai egon iratzarri, zoin aldetik jinen den egunaz edo gauaz haren atakatzera.

Bada, neure adiskidea, herioa bai eta euskaraz jaunaren mezua eta haren mandataria, arrazoi [ukanen du] zuri eta niti erraiteko jin dadinean, ez bagaitez ezpata prest grazian haren aidurutik eta beha: Inimigos tienes y dormes? Etsaia oren oroz bortan [dugu], gure etxean [dugu]; [gaitzezen egon] prest grazian, nahi ez badugu ikusi arimen hiltzea, galtzea eta ruinamendu totala. (pp. 46-47)

First paragraph:

The first sentence is a coordinate sentence. Leaving out the subordinate clauses, these are the two sentences it is made up of:


The focus follows the verb in both of the coordinated sentences. In the subordinate clauses, on the contrary, the focus is placed before the verb.

Let’s move on to the first part of the second sentence:

- Bertze egun batez españolak hor hura bera [ediren zuen] borta hartan berean lo zetzala

The focus has not been marked, because I am not clear about it. It looks to me that lo zetzala ‘sleeping’ is the focus. The reading of the sentence would be more difficult if we were to place the verb after the focus.

The second part:

- eta, ezpata baitzuen bere saihetsean, idokirik eta biluzurik bere maginatik eta bere furrebotik hora [hil zuen ‘he killed’] ezpata kolpe bat emanik, ‘giving a sword stroke’

The rule of the galdegaia is followed in the first subordinate clause and not in the second. However, neither one nor the other follows another of Altube’s rules, which says that the subordination marker must come at the end of the subordinate clause; indeed, the subordinating affixes bait- and -(r)ik are not in final position in their corresponding clauses.

Returning to the paragraph, we see that the focus, that is, the direct question, comes after the verb in the main sentence of the last sequence; the focus of the subordinate clause is before the verb, though:

- ikusi zuenean hora hiliko edo hiltzen, [erran zuen ‘he told’] horari bere lengoajea, español ez: Inimigos tienes e dormes? ‘Having enemies you sleep?, erran nahi bai gure lengoajea euskaraz: “Etsaikuan eta lo egiten duki?”

There is an interesting fact about the main sentence above. We realize that the original version is much quicker to read than nowadays variant adding zera o hau ‘this’:

- zera/hau [erran zuen] horari bere lengoajean, español ez: Inimigos tienes e dormes?

Second paragraph:

- Arrazoi ‘reason’ [zuuen ‘he had’] españolak hala erraitera horari, zeren etsaiak dituenak ez baitu behar lo egin, baina bai egon iratzarri, zoin aldetik jinen den egunaz edo gauaz haren atakatzera.

All the focused elements are before the verb except one. The subordinating affix -tzera is not in final position as Altube’s rule states. According to the rule, we should write:

- Arrazoi [zuuen] españolak horari hala erraitera

Third paragraph:


In all main sentences and subordinate clauses, the focused elements are before the verb with the exception of prest (and it is not clear whether the focus is that or grazian ‘in grace’ but in any case, both follow the verb). Notice that all focused phrases are made up of one or two elements but are always short.

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1.5. Ene lumaren herexa


The focus is after the verb in the first three sentences.

Let’s go on to the fourth sentence:

- [Zoa’s ‘go’] aintzina ‘ahead’, alde baterat ez bertzerat, ezker ez eskuin makurtu gabe, eta [ediren zuzu ‘find’] bide haren buruan hiltze on bat ‘a good death’ eta, haren ondoan, Jainko bat zure aiduru, koroa bat eskuan, zure rekonpensatzeko.

As we see, the focused elements follow the verb in the coordinated sentences, but the focus precedes the verb in the subordinate clause.

Let’s analyse the last sentence:

- [Promes emaiten dizut ‘I promise you’] aingeruen eta gizonen aitzinezain Jainkoaren partez eta ene ohorearen gainean ene errana egia frogatuko duzula ‘that you will prove the truth’; eta ez bada hala, [errazu ‘tell’] mundu orori afrontur bat naizela ‘that I am a disgrace’, gizagaixto bat naizela, apez gaixto bat naizela, eta ene liburutto honek eta nik merexi dugula su handi batetan bizirik erre gaitzezen.

The sentence is crowded with nominal clauses, all following the main verb, none before it. This is a list of them:

- egia frogatuko duzuza
- afrontur bat naizela
- gizagaixto bat naizela
- apez gaixto bat naizela
- merexi dugula su handi batetan bizirik erre gaitzezen

Tartas places all nominal clauses, not just the ones above, after the main verb and not before like this:

- egia frogatuko duzuza [promes emaiten dizut]
- afrontur bat naizela [errazu]
- gizagaixto bat naizela
- apez gaixto bat naizela
- eta (...) su handi batetan bizirik erre gaitzezen
- merexi dugula

Summing up, the focus never appears before the verb in the main clauses, but it does in the subordinate clauses; and the focus is short in all the clauses.

1.6. Gizon bat egun batez

This last text has been written in two columns: on the left, the original, and on the right, nowadays version.

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Neure adiskidea: zure miseria zonbat handi den [kontsidera ezazu]. Gaua, eguna, beroa, hotza, idorda, bustia, mundua, infernua zure kontre [dira]. Haien artean gaixki zara. Miseri hortaz [oroturik], zure hitzearaz [orot zaitez], ontsa [hilik] [nahi bazara saltatu].

Tartas’ version is much easier to read than today’s variant.

2. Conclusions

This is our balance (leaving aside the sixth text):

There are two questions that could be asked regarding the main sentences: on the one hand, the position where the writer places the focused elements; on the other hand, whether the focus being short or long influences its position. Tartas breaks the rule of the galdeaga on more occasions than J. B. Agirre, from Asteasu (who did it in 80% of the cases as we saw in Hagitze 34); as happened in the analysis of Agirre’s work, in this one too, the size of the focus affects its position: before the verb or after it when it is short, and always after it when it is long. All that means that Tartas, like Agirre, places the verb as close to the beginning as possible.

In the subordinate clauses, the writer uses the focus mainly after the subordinate verb. These are some examples, the most significant ones (the focused elements in italics and the subordinating conjunctions in capitals):

Relative clauses

a. With the conjunction ZEIN BAIT-

• Historia eder bat irakurten dugu bi adiskide handiz eta leialeez. ZOINAK deitazten BAITziren Damon eta Pythias, biak adiskide fidelak eta segurak.

• hala-hala justoa mundu honetari jalgitzen denean, leku hertsitik eta leku tipitik [doa] leku handi, zabal eta largu batetara, ZOIN BAITA zerua eta zeruko errresuma

b. With the conjunction BAIT-

• Hargatik justoaen hiltea deitazten da sortzea, zeren leku hertsitik, BAITA lurra, joaten baita leku handiala eta largualoa, BAITA zerua
Nominal clauses

- Historiak [dio] (...) Denis Sirokusako tiran handi hark bi adiskide brabe eta leial haietarik bat kondenatu zueLA hiltzera.

Tartas places absolutely all nominal clauses after the main verb.

Time clauses

- zeren hala nola haur bat sortzen deNEAN bere amaren sabeletik mundura, leku tipitik eta leku hertsitik jalgirik
- eta gero, ikusi zueNEAN hora hilik edo hiltzen

Causal clauses

- ZEREN hala nola haur bat sortzen denean bere amaren sabeletik mundura, leku tipitik eta leku hertsitik jalgirik, sartzen BAITa leku handi, zabal eta largo batetara
- Hargatik justoaren hiltzea deitatzen da sortzea, ZEREN leku hertsitik, bairra lurra, joaten BAITa leku handiala eta largoala, bairra zera

Similar rules to those given for the main sentences apply to the subordinate clauses.

Looking at the subordinate clauses above, we realize that the subordinators (-ela, bait-...) are not placed in final position, even if that is what Altube recommends and, unfortunately, how we write nowadays.

As an overall summary, and if we compare Basque usage today with Tartas’s usage, we could say that, far from being similar, they are nearly opposite. But which one is easier to read, nowadays Basque or the Basque used by the classic writers?

3. Bibliography